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Developing entrepreneurial leadership: the challenge for sustainable organisations

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Abstract

This article explores the emerging contribution of leadership development to sustainable entrepreneurship. It addresses the need to develop research and effective practices, and suggests how this may be achieved in the context of the challenges organisations which aim for sustainability face in generating longer-term entrepreneurial leadership; in developing an entrepreneurial culture, and in facilitating people into leadership roles which bring about continuing innovation, development and growth.

Based on a critical review of the relevant literature and on case-based research, a model for the development of sustainable entrepreneurial leadership is developed with four related themes of strategic direction, culture, community and entrepreneurial innovation. These are proposed as essential contributors to the development of leadership for longer-term sustainability of such organisations and to suggest a future research pathway.

The article summarises four case studies developed from research with entrepreneurial leaders in sustainable community organisations, including private, 'for-profit', community, and social enterprise organisations, two in Canada and two in the United Kingdom. Interpretation of the cases identifies the importance of the leaders' principles and ethical values; community involvement; opportunity scanning; and social innovation.

Keywords:

Leadership, sustainability, social enterprise, community, entrepreneurship, innovation

JEL Classification: O150 Economic Development: Human Resources; Human Development; Income Distribution; Migration

Developing entrepreneurial leadership: the challenge for sustainable organisations

1. Introduction

Interest in the application of entrepreneurship to organisational development has grown significantly in recent years. This includes the question of how entrepreneurship can become sustainable in social, ecological and economic terms, a debate which includes, but is not limited to, social entrepreneurship (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011) and social innovation (Howaldt et al, 2014). The quest for responsible forms of entrepreneurship has gained momentum since the financial crisis of 2008 and a growing critique of the more extreme forms of individualistic entrepreneurial behaviour (Rae, 2010).

This interest in emerging new forms of entrepreneurship is gaining influence at community, societal and cultural levels, and engaging wider interest and support beyond most conventional entrepreneur-driven firms (Underwood et al, 2012). There is growth in the scale and influence of organisations in the sustainable entrepreneurship arena, driven by increasing economic and social demands; the withdrawal of governmental organisations from areas of service delivery; and an acknowledgement that social innovations are essential in enabling societies to address fundamental environmental and economic changes (UNEP, 2011).

However, the question of how and by whom these organisations can be led effectively towards sustainability is, as yet, little explored. The roles of founders, entrepreneurs and leaders of such organisations can offer them a public profile, yet relatively little is known about leadership development in the field of sustainable entrepreneurship. There is increasing interest in the convergence between sustainable entrepreneurship as a social movement, and leadership as a distributed concept in such organisations. There are dynamic and powerful connections between leadership, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in creating educational, economic and social change, but there is not yet a conceptualisation of leadership for sustainable enterprise, nor of how this can be developed. The emerging literature on sustainable entrepreneurship arguably lacks new insights into the human dynamics through which it can be realised; referring for example to 'institutional entrepreneurs' (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011) and 'ecopreneurs' (Dixon & Clifford, 2007). This gap suggests that more conceptual development is required, although there are increasing practical examples of leadership development.

The article defines the problem of leadership for sustainable entrepreneurship in organisations. It proposes why there is a need to develop research and effective practices in this area, and how this might be achieved. Building on earlier work (Rae, 2014), it explores the field of leadership development and its emerging contribution to sustainable entrepreneurship through a summarised review of relevant literature in the fields of entrepreneurial leadership, social and sustainable entrepreneurship, and social innovation. It then studies the question of how organisations which aim for sustainability in the longer term can generate entrepreneurial leadership; how they can develop and maintain an entrepreneurial culture, and how they can facilitate people into leadership roles, to enable continuing innovation, development and growth. It develops a conceptual model of leadership for organisational sustainability which identifies relevant themes for the study. Four case studies of leadership in sustainable organizations are presented, two from the United Kingdom and two from Canada. A cross-case comparison builds on the conceptual model using a set of themes related to leadership development and organisational sustainability. Insights from the cases in

relation to the conceptual model are proposed, followed by policy implications and recommendations for further work.

The exploration of these cases of organisations suggests that achieving an organisationally sustainable approach, in particular related to succession management, is challenging in developing new leadership for sustainable organisations. Knowledge of how such organisations can generate new leadership to be sustainable beyond the founding generation is not yet well established, and this study aims to contribute to this emerging knowledge base.

2. The problem of leadership for entrepreneurship in sustainable organisations

Entrepreneurship, in the context of sustainable and social operation, is taken here as the recognition and enactment of opportunities for creating and sharing multiple forms of value (QAA, 2012). This includes the application of ideas and innovations which enact opportunities for social, economic and environmental change, both in immediate, practical situations and in future-oriented scenarios which transform new thinking into realities. Such entrepreneurial opportunities create multiple forms of value, including social, environmental and ecological, technological, cultural, heritage and aesthetic dimensions. These are broader in scope than purely financial and economic metrics and are increasingly recognised by communities alongside financial and economic. Sustainable organisations often re-invest financial returns, in whole or in part, back into the venture or the community (Henry, 2012).

The conventional, 'free-enterprise' model of entrepreneurship, based on individual action and risk-taking in a competitive market for personal financial reward, is problematic and challenged by emerging concerns about the social, ethical and ecological consequences of unrestrained exploitation of finite resources (Lewis & Conaty 2012). Sustainable entrepreneurship incorporates values gathered from a wider range of sources than free-market economics alone. Sustainability is defined consistently with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) summarised by Adams (2006), in development being sustainable in relation to the interdependent pillars of economic growth, environmental protection, and social progress:

'Sustainability needs to be made the basis of a new understanding of human aspiration and achievement.' (Adams 2006:12).

There are strong connections between sustainable entrepreneurship and the related, but distinct, fields of social enterprise, entrepreneurship, social innovation (Underwood et al, 2012), and with ecopreneurship (Dixon & Clifford, 2007; Moon, 2013). This broad field can also be expressed as 'New-era' entrepreneurship (Rae, 2010), and may include aspects of social justice and inclusion, ecological and environmental awareness, communitarianism, feminism, and political economy.

Sustainable, new-era and eco-preneurship increasingly challenge the links between entrepreneurship and Western capitalist economic growth models which was generally accepted prior to the 2008 financial crisis (Lewis & Conaty 2012). Such models prioritise the exploitation of short-term opportunities in the interests of financial and economic value capture and maximisation, rewarding principally managers and investors, to the exclusion of longer-term community, social and especially environmental sustainability, limited at the margins by legal frameworks and the salve of corporate social responsibility (Baumol, 1990). Sustainable entrepreneurship is based on long-term

values, but is unlikely to succeed if it relies solely on myriads of unconnected individual actions. Rather, sustainable entrepreneurship must become a collective movement for systemic cultural, social and economic transformation, progressing from the foundations of community and social enterprise. Its scale must be both local and immediate, but also global, ultimately seeking to bring about change at corporate, governmental and international levels (CBI, 2012).

To succeed, it is proposed that sustainable entrepreneurship depends on the development of three, interconnected, aspects: leadership; learning; and a supportive cultural, political and economic context.

Leadership is required not only at the levels of the individual organisation (enterprise, institution, community), but also at broader intellectual and political levels, to articulate the essential vision and longer-term ambition for change. Leadership for sustainable entrepreneurship should be seen as a socially responsive, shared responsibility, analogous to the notion of distributed leadership (Ancona et al, 2005) where people at different levels and roles within an organization assume and demonstrate leadership towards a common set of goals. Greanleaf (1977) long ago espoused the practice of servant leadership. Such leadership is inclusive and enables others to develop and to become leaders. The lack of leadership capacity and capability acts as a constraint on developing sustainable enterprises, yet entrepreneurial leadership can unlock the potential for wider-scale ambition and impact of sustainable entrepreneurship. (Greenberg et al, 2011).

The term leadership is used to denote an organisational process for leading, rather than the role description of leader, just as entrepreneurship is referred to as a value-creating activity, as distinct from entrepreneurs (Jones & Crompton, 2009). Individuals at various times respond to the perceived needs and opportunities to act as leaders, entrepreneurs and to combine both roles, as illustrated by the case studies in this article. However the requirement for organisational sustainability means these processes need to become culturally embedded and practised at a collective, rather than purely individual level. The promotion of the individual is problematic, since both leadership and entrepreneurship carry implicit meanings of exceptional performance, exclusivity and power, often perpetuated by social and media stereotypes. This can elevate the expectations of such leadership to a level where they seem unattainable by 'ordinary people', who may have the potential skills and capabilities to develop as leaders but who do not self-identify with such stereotypes.

Entrepreneurial learning theory assumes that such 'ordinary people' can enhance their capacity for entrepreneurship and for leadership, if they choose to do so, to the limits of their abilities.

Entrepreneurial learning is a process of social emergence and identity construction, in which the individual learns and becomes to fulfil their potential (Rae, 2015; Kempster & Cope, 2010). As all individuals are in some respects limited and flawed, it is essential that they learn to interact and collaborate with others who have complementary strengths. Entrepreneurial leadership is a social and connected practice, involving trust, shared values and reciprocity. Learning is integral and essential within sustainable entrepreneurship. Within education and more broadly at a societal level, people need to learn why and how entrepreneurship can and must be sustainable, and what that means in understanding, critiquing and limiting the effects of unsustainable entrepreneurship.

Campbell (2014) proposed that governance is an essential aspect of leadership being accountability to communities, based on a conception of social leadership with foundations of sociology, philosophy, servant leadership, social interactionism and sustainability. A supportive cultural,

political and economic context is essential for the growth of sustainable entrepreneurship. If the ambient social and economic values reward only individual self-enrichment regardless of its wider costs and consequences, the task is much harder. Educating society, policy-makers and decision-makers is therefore essential to inform and influence changes in policy, norms and practices (DEFRA, 2011).

3. Critique of prior literature

This section summarises for critique relevant contributions from the literature on entrepreneurial leadership, and explores the relationships with leadership in social enterprise; sustainable entrepreneurship; and social innovation. These are expressed diagrammatically in figure 1, which illustrates the principal themes explored.

[insert figure 1 here]

Roomi & Harrison (2011) contributed to this field by defining entrepreneurial leadership, and reviewing approaches to its teaching in Higher Education. They observed the lack of prior research on entrepreneurial leadership, and deficient understanding of the topic, with little attention paid to how entrepreneurial leadership behaviours are learnt. Highlighting significant prior contributions, they compared contextual, situation-specific leadership (Vecchio, 2003) and holistic approaches to entrepreneurial leadership in the literature, noting a lack of definition based on conflicting models. They found there to be little explicit teaching of entrepreneurial leadership, with entrepreneurship more emphasised than leadership. Their overall conclusion was that: 'entrepreneurial leadership education should teach students how to cultivate their entrepreneurial capability in leadership roles and their leadership capability in entrepreneurial contexts... balancing creativity, influence, a particular attitude to risk, and an ability to access scarce resources strategically.' (Roomi & Harrison, 2011:29).

Their work highlighted other contributors, including Gupta, MacMillan and Surie (2004), who explored entrepreneurial leadership as a set of active behaviours (i.e. what one does), suggesting that entrepreneurial leaders enact the challenges of communicating a vision and of influencing others to help them realise it. The active and experiential nature of learning was also noted by Gibb (1993) in the context of the small business. Following Covin and Slevin (2002), they proposed that entrepreneurial leadership education should teach how to exploit and use their own and co-workers' entrepreneurial mind-sets.

Kuratko (2007) addressed the role of entrepreneurial leadership primarily as economic leadership, operating entirely within the paradigm of western capitalist economies, without questioning this approach, other than brief consideration of 'the dark side of entrepreneurship' and the ethical role of the entrepreneurial leader. In contrast, Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson (2011) proposed an explicitly values and action-based approach to entrepreneurial leadership, which they defined as: 'leaders must rely more on action than analysis to create new opportunities. By taking action, leaders learn about a situation and can use their understanding to guide future action. Furthermore, by taking action leaders connect with and inspire others to co-create solutions to seemingly intractable problems' (Greenberg, McKone-Sweet and Wilson, 2011:56).

They differentiated from entrepreneurship as new value creation and conceptualised entrepreneurial leadership as introducing new products and processes, enacting new strategic directions, solving complex business, social, and environmental problems, and starting new

companies. They defined three principles for entrepreneurial leadership: cognitive ambidexterity; commitment to social, environmental, and economic value creation; and self-awareness.

Harrison, Leitch and McMullan have made substantive contributions to the field, posing implications for education and development and addressing team-based learning and leadership (Harrison & Leitch, 1994; Henry, Hill and Leitch 2005). Leitch, McMullan & Harrison (2009) addressed the application of action learning to leadership in the small firm context, with a focus on the effectiveness of learning outcomes and proposing the integrated development of personal identity, social interaction and organisational development in the learning process. Leitch, McMullan & Harrison (2013) explored the roles of human, social and institutional capital in developing entrepreneurial leadership through a relational perspective.

Kempster and Cope (2010) brought prior research perspectives to bear from entrepreneurial learning, introducing a conceptual framework for restricted leadership learning in the entrepreneurial context. They found limited experiential forms of social interactive and reflective learning to develop entrepreneurial and leadership capabilities. Also drawing on the entrepreneurial learning literature, Bagheri and Pihie (2011) proposed a model defining entrepreneurial leadership development, based on a dynamic process of experiential, social interactive, observational and reflective learning as a foundation for entrepreneurial leadership practice, education and research. Other contributors including Baron and Ensly (2006) and Lans et al. (2008) argued that entrepreneurial competencies and leadership can be learned.

In relation to social entrepreneurs, Smith et al (2011) employed paradox theory to address leadership skills and pedagogical tools, developing theory about how leaders of social enterprises can cultivate skills for managing competing social and financial demands, such as the inherent conflicts between social and economic missions. Gravells (2012) examined the factors determining leadership success in UK social enterprises. The proposed model includes 'ways of being' of self-awareness; courage and calm; strong values; and caring for others. Contra-indicators and a set of behaviours were also identified as required for successful leadership in social enterprises.

In connection with the developing field of sustainable entrepreneurship, there has been conceptual development, but less attention to the human agency required and to the requirement for leadership. Shepherd & Patzelt (2011) developed conceptualisations and a framework for sustainable entrepreneurship, which advanced an institutional perspective and considered psychological aspects of the motivation for sustainable entrepreneurship.

Schaltegger & Wagner (2011) proposed a framework to position sustainable entrepreneurship in relation to sustainability innovation, building on a typology of sustainable entrepreneurship addressing environmental and economic goals. However, their typology views entrepreneurship from an institutional and structural perspective, and there is again little exploration of the human agency of entrepreneurial leadership.

'The organizational challenge of entrepreneurship is to better integrate environmental performance into the economic business logic' [223].

Social innovation is a relatively new movement which develops and applies innovative approaches for societal benefit, drawing on collective knowledge and capabilities from networks of concerned people. It is based on the idea of a social economy in which active citizenship and collaborative action can bring about change and the applications of changing technology can be used to address societal challenges which are unresolved by conventional approaches (Murray et al, 2010). It

introduces advanced ideas on the applications of new knowledge and technologies to create new economic models beyond conventional assumptions of financial value creation.

Murray et al, in their work for NESTA in the UK (2010), defined social innovation as: 'innovations that are both social in their ends and in their means'.

This definition covers new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet collectively recognised social needs more effectively than through existing means, and create new social relationships or collaborations that both benefit society and enhance societal capability to act effectively.

Social innovation has multiple connections with social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, but its exponents take more radical and longer-term stances to changing the dynamics of how societies and economies work by connecting the market, social, household and public economies, whilst social entrepreneurship is more concerned with initiating activities to address specific needs and opportunities within this context (Howaldt et al, 2014).

Murray et al. (2010) commented on the two distinctive themes of transformative innovation: Technology-based networks and global infrastructures for information and social networking; and the human dimension of culture and values, starting with the individual and relationships rather than systems and structures. Howaldt et al (2014) conducted a major literature review on the theoretical foundations of social innovation and its connections with social theory, entrepreneurship, innovation and management studies. This drew on the work of Tidd & Bessant on innovation management which connected strategic leadership and entrepreneurship as innovative organising in a dynamic innovation funnel, which converges market with technological knowledge (Tidd & Bessant, 2013). The connections between social innovation and the leadership capabilities required to advance it do not otherwise seem very evident in the literature, being referred to in the context of social networks and actors, but with little depth in the analysis of how the leadership process is enacted in social innovation, although there are a number of leadership development programs available.

Overall, the literature cited on entrepreneurial leadership and the related fields of sustainability and social innovation include diverse theoretical perspectives and conceptual models. Each of these fields requires human agency, social collaboration, communications skills and other capabilities to advance them in organisational practice. However, leadership is implicitly rather than explicitly required, and this review found little evidence of theoretical literature on the development of leadership for sustainability and entrepreneurship in the organisational field. There is more evidence of work situated in educational initiatives in leadership development within Higher Education than on the study of actual cases of leadership in entrepreneurial organisations, and hence there is a gap between the studies of leadership education and practice.

There is also little consensus on the nature of entrepreneurial leadership beyond the notion of the individual, and little convergence between the study of entrepreneurial leadership and of leadership in the fields of sustainable entrepreneurship, social enterprise and social innovation. The development of sustainable enterprises is reliant on the formation of effective leadership in the long term, but there also appears to be a gap in theoretical knowledge here, and in turn in the translation between theory and practice in informing the development of sustainable entrepreneurship in organisations. This gap opens up an emerging area of knowledge which is explored further in this study.

4. Methodology

This study aims to contribute an understanding of how entrepreneurial leadership can be developed in sustainable organisations. The chosen approach was inductive and interpretive, specifically through research in a small number of such organisations, to develop case studies of leadership, and to compare them in order to identify any distinctive or shared themes or characteristics. The subject of the case study was the organisation, with the leader being a key informant at a critical period in its development, rather than the lens being entirely on the entrepreneur-leader in person. The challenge for these organisations was their ongoing sustainability rather than their current leadership, which made consideration of leadership within their ongoing wider context, culture and community essential.

This methodology was informed by sources including Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2003) on case study research, and Leitch, Hill and Harrison (2010) on conducting interpretive research in a social context. The method was qualitative, with information being gathered through a range of methods, including arranged interviews with the leaders; document review including strategic plans and marketing information; presentations; meetings and site visits; informal conversations with employees and members in the community; observation within the organisation; and website-related information. The collection, analysis and editing of this information enabled a descriptive case study to be prepared for each organisation, whilst using a consistent approach overall.

In terms of selecting organisations for inclusion in the study, the criteria were that the organisation already exist, with at least five years history to demonstrate its own sustainability, and that the leader have a track record of leadership. It should be an entrepreneurial organisation, demonstrated by a track record of innovation and growth in its activities. It should have a social or community mission, and a commitment to environmental sustainability, ideally with evidence of reviewing or reporting on these aspects. The group of cases studies include a mix of different organisational types, activities, and community relationships. Coverage of more than one country, and inclusion of both male and female genders in leadership roles, was also desirable. Finally, it was desirable for the organisations to be named, and for information in the cases to be in the public domain. Although anonymous cases are commonly used and may allow more sensitive information to be revealed, the advantage of using named organisations is that readers are free to form their own interpretations from the case data as well as other information they may collect. Also, the use of named organisations allows the use of a more 'authentic' and realistic approach.

A range of organisations were considered, from which four were selected and agreed to participate in the study. Two of the cases are from the East Midlands of the United Kingdom and two from Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, Canada. These provide a degree of international comparison, yet more relevant is that all are rooted very much in their communities, and their work has wider influence on sustainable entrepreneurial and policy development. Their characteristics are shown in table 1.

[insert table 1 here]

Each of the leaders was contacted and an interview arranged, lasting between 60-90 minutes. The conversation initially covered the background to the organisation, and then explored questions, responses and practices relating to a range of themes, including:

- organisational strategy (purpose, values, goals)
- community (culture, responsibility, reciprocity, engagement)

- entrepreneurial development (opportunities, innovation)
- leadership development (management, learning, staffing, selection)
- power (decision-making, resources & rewards)

The conversations were not audio recorded, but notes were taken by the researcher. Extensive further material was gathered in the course of the researcher's involvement with the organisation, which occurred over a period of one or more years. To prepare the case studies, the material gathered was analysed, coded to identify concepts and categories arising from the material, and a narrative case was drafted, edited and checked.

The cases follow in the next section. Each of these summarises the background of the organisation in its community, its development, its approach to community and sustainability, and leadership issues relating to the case. The cases are then compared at a thematic level and a conceptual model is developed from this analysis.

5. The cases

5.1 Hill Holt Wood: a case of social innovation

5.1.1 Background & development

Hill Holt Wood (HHW) was instigated through the ambition of Nigel Lowthrop, a biologist, to own and bring into active use an area of ancient woodland; many small, old woods were neglected and unproductive, too small for commercial forestry, yet with the potential to become community assets. Aided by his wife, Karen, in 1995 he purchased Hill Holt Wood, a 14-hectare envelope of mixed woodland between Lincoln and Newark in the East Midlands of the United Kingdom. He recognised that by putting the wood to active use, it could become a resource for social enterprise and community development. Guided by three key interdependent principles of environmental, economic, and social sustainability, an organisation was established to include an education and training charity and a community-based subsidiary trading arm.

There was always an ambition to make a social difference. It took 10 years to build trust with communities, decision-makers and organisations such as local authority district and county councils through an open and transparent approach. An ethical business model was used to gather problems and create new solutions, based on innovative uses of the resources available.

5.1.2 Community & sustainability

Initially a Management Committee was established with community representation by welcoming people to meetings and become involved in running the business. From this the Board of Directors of the Social Enterprise developed, trading as a charity. Engaging closely with the local communities, HHW diversified from the original mission to conserve the woodland into a resource base of environmental, social and therapeutic health activities. The strategy developed into not being reliant on any individual or family. The approach is to balance economy, environmental and social/community value creation equally. Generating revenue and profit is necessary but profit maximisation is not the goal.

The woodland is managed actively, being conserved and maintained for public use, whilst promoting environmental sustainability. Young people who may be at risk and excluded from mainstream

education experience its alternative curriculum as a learning environment in which they can develop skills and realise their potential. The woodland management service has expanded to provide ranger and countryside management across other woodland. The therapeutic environment enables eco-therapy woodland activities for adults with mental distress to improve their well-being. An events and café business have developed as commercial services. Weddings take place, tree planting to celebrate births and green burials provide income to support Hill Holt Health.

Creating buildings within the woodland required a mix of new and old skills which led to the formation of a design team for sustainable buildings, providing work experience for architecture students. This specialises in sustainable buildings using traditional methods and natural materials including timber framing, rammed earth, straw bales and limecrete. Many projects were created, including a spectacular Woodland Community Hall, and won many awards. HHW also gained recognition from policymakers and community groups, environmentalists and social enterprises by developing innovative approaches to tackle social and environmental problems using the principles of sustainable, environmental and local action in economically viable ways; by creating jobs; providing valued services; and maintaining woodland as a community asset.

5.1.3 Leadership

Nigel's perspective on leadership was expressed as:

"If you have vision, viable ideas and leadership skills, then lead or it probably will not happen. Develop communication skills to ensure that you can explain your vision, inspire and enthuse communities to support the development. Don't be seen as imposing your model but provide solutions to multiple problems. For local community enterprises, adding value is key to success and survival."

After founding HHW, he stepped down as CEO when the Forestry Commission remarked that 'it's all about you'. Nigel sees himself as the visionary and creative thinker, initiating change and problem-solving. He described this as a missing element in the organisation. His wife Karen moved from the corporate sector to become active in the enterprise, replacing him as CEO. She also announced her intention to stand down, giving the Board and management team two years notice. This created a challenge for the future leadership of the organisation.

Whilst HHW is assured about its ethos, values and purpose, there is less clarity about its ambitions for the future and strategy to achieve these. The management team became settled in their roles, managerial rather than entrepreneurial. The organisation did not attract or, especially, develop people with the motivation and vision to lead it in the future, making succession a live issue. They did not resolve how important growth will be in responding to external opportunities; what it can achieve; and how can this be balanced with a sustainable approach, without risking effective stewardship of the 'core' Wood and its organisation. Recruiting and mentoring potential talent is a vital area for entrepreneurial development in social enterprise. Nowhere is this more true than in the leadership of the organisation.

5.2 Genesis Enterprise Foundation

5.2.1 Background & development

The Genesis Enterprise Foundation was formed in 1991 from a vision of four Christian couples to make a difference in their community of Alfreton, a Derbyshire former mining town. Steve Holmes, a corporate banker and entrepreneur, was part of this group. They were concerned about the social fabric of the community and the limited opportunities for young people.

The first years saw the development of several building projects to accommodate and support teenage expectant mothers as a refuge to avoid abortion; disaffected young teenagers; and a youth hostel foyer scheme. These projects were delivered with minimal capital grant support and sustained by a mixture of grants and income generation with personal contributions from the Board and staff. The learning curves were significant but the need for funding to survive became evident, with projects faltering once grant support had ended.

In 1999, on a study group to examine the story and structure of Mondragon in Northern Spain, Steve Holmes was inspired both by how the region had been transformed by a Catholic Priest and local entrepreneur working together “combining heart and mind, but also by the ex-drug addicts running a hostel in Madrid and running a food bank: Social Enterprise could be a ‘prophetic pendulum’ or see-saw which causes the conscience of the nation to respond”.

5.2.2 Community & sustainability

The challenge was how to grow the organisation to serve its community objectives, whilst producing wealth or social capital entrepreneurially, and making ethical business work within the community. “I moved from banking in the private sector into social enterprise, taking social responsibility as an entrepreneur, my psyche is meeting challenges with enterprising thoughts. I see making money as an enabler for sustainability. When we started in the early 2000’s, charities and voluntary organisations were told to become social enterprises. They did not have entrepreneurial people running them or as trustees, it was a bear trap.”

During the next few years the organisation grew into childcare and youth services, acquiring properties to provide revenue and job opportunities. A disused bus garage was acquired when an opportunity arose to make applications for regional funding to deliver sustainable community projects. The timing was ideal to build a centre to produce wealth and also serve the community. They submitted a proposal for the redevelopment of the bus depot into a Centre for Social Enterprise and Incubation Unit. This attracted matching funding to create the Genesis Centre for Social Enterprise supporting over 40 new jobs and training places, which invests in community work and has developed a net asset base of £2.2 million or \$4m (Annibal, 2014). Other ventures have also been created, including a Dental Care network for deprived communities with lack of access to dentists which was sold to reinvest in community development.

Genesis SE is 90% self-funding, but its financial sustainability is fragile. It employs 260 people, and is in a challenging period, reliant on public sector contracts and tenants. Sustainability can be achieved, says Holmes, through creating profit which can be reinvested, and through a cyclical approach to continual innovation. Rather than stasis, they flip problems into opportunities, find latent resources, and put them to work.

5.2.3 Leadership

Steve Holmes described his approach as a social entrepreneur:

“Being entrepreneurial is different to being a manager. I am motivated by a start-up challenge, building a team. I’ve seen it before I’ve touched it. I have managers who organise and do the detail. I am a serial entrepreneur, the challenge is to find who could succeed and take over from myself, it’s how to get freed up.”

5.3 New Dawn

5.3.1 Background & development

Sydney in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia was a centre of coal and steel production which brought prosperity and economic development from the 19th to the mid-20th century. The decline of these heavy industries left a void which the community still struggles to fill. New Dawn is a community business founded in 1976 to address the social and economic decline of industrial Cape Breton. The founder was Father Greg MacLeod, a Catholic academic who was informed by the community development work of Father Tompkins and the Antigonish Movement of social organisations. Tompkins had formed a People’s School at St Francis Xavier University which taught young people social leadership. MacLeod was able to combine a number of areas of knowledge, including community economic development, to the establishment of New Dawn and to attracting a group of people committed to making a difference. New Dawn has experienced many turbulent financial and organisational periods but has become the oldest Community Development Corporation in Canada (Peters, 2010). Its mission is to engage the community to create and support the development of a culture of self-reliance.

Its activities have grown to include the provision of health care, real estate and social housing, and training. It employs over 175 people and has a long record of social innovation. It runs an Innovation Fund as a Community Economic Development Investment Fund (CEDIF) which attracts and invests a pool of \$10m in the growth of local entrepreneurial businesses.

5.3.2 Community & sustainability

The organising principles of New Dawn, personal and community power, have enabled it to adapt and survive during changing and difficult phases including those currently challenging the region, and being recognised in the One Nova Scotia report (2014) for its contribution. It has addressed and at times confronted governmental institutions over local issues, such as port development and land use. Critical to its ability to sustain is the engagement of people from the community to contribute to its governance and management. New Dawn provides services which are socially required but governmental agencies cannot provide. It has built up a financial, property and social asset base which provides operational sustainability. A major acquisition was the landmark Holy Angels School building in Sydney which had closed and was in danger of blight. New Dawn acquired it and developed a long-term plan for its mixed use as a Centre for Social Innovation housing creative, community, educational and technology uses.

5.3.3 Leadership

New Dawn is governed by a Board of voluntary directors. MacLeod retired from direct involvement and set up a social investment group. Rankin MacSween became President and CEO in 1993 and has served for 22 years, having been involved with New Dawn from 1977. A charismatic figure, who controversially ran for Mayor in 2013, he has made some questionable decisions but has led the

organisation to a position of strength. His view of Cape Breton is 'this community is dying...but I am incredibly optimistic!'. His modus operandi is to gather together smart people to look at problems and come up with solutions, an approach which works both in social innovation and people development. No doubt there will be a successor to MacSween in due course, but the structure of Board governance, the competence of the management group, and strength of committed community support suggest that New Dawn has the ability to sustain and renew itself as an organisation.

5.4 Membertou First Nation: Canadian leadership in community entrepreneurship

5.4.1 Background & development

One group which was never been allowed to share in the transient prosperity of industrial Cape Breton was the First Nation Mi'kmaq tribe, who for generations were excluded from mainstream opportunities and deprived of their Reserve lands. They occupied the Membertou district at the edge of the city, named after Grand Chief Henri Membertou. Small-scale entrepreneurship, in traditional crafts, fishing, retailing and services, became their way of life. The Membertou First Nations organisation dates back to 1959, but until the 1990s it operated as a grant-aided reserve community under the Indian Act with very little self-generated income. It is an unusual example of a reserve in Atlantic Canada which has become a highly successful business organisation.

Their Chief, Terry Paul, had been exposed to economic development ideas in the early days of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, while he was living in Boston. He was elected Chief in 1984, and started to apply those principles from the 1990's to create business activity and employment for the Membertou community. After a few false starts an approach, developed through experience, was to create a 'First Nations Progression Model' of initial capacity-building to develop leadership, management and systems for financial accountability and governance, based on principles of conservation, sustainability, innovation and success. This enabled preparation for strategic planning, resource allocation and investment in business opportunities. The result was economic development through partnerships, agreements, and new ventures, creating income streams and employment. Over twenty years, a series of businesses have been established, based on the Membertou Reserve, including a Trade and Convention Centre, a major hotel, a restaurant, a Gaming Commission, a Business Centre, Entrepreneur Centre and other businesses including seafoods, retailing and a Corporate Division. A Sports & Wellness centre with an ice hockey rink is under construction to open in 2016.

5.4.2 Community & sustainability

Chief Paul developed a management team which expanded to run a range of service divisions and businesses. Long-term commitment to education and human capital development is enabling young people to progress into Higher Education and then into responsible roles in the organisation. The community continues to expand its land ownership, its population, its business activities and rate of employment. The total revenue has grown to exceed \$124 million, with over 550 employees in 2014. Membertou has borrowed \$10million for long-term infrastructure investment and in addition to build a new highway junction for the Reserve, enabling more land to be acquired for retail, residential and business development (Membertou, 2013). By 2013, Membertou became one of the two fastest-growing parts of the Cape Breton economy. Its success demonstrates that a community-

led, collective approach to strategic entrepreneurial development can inspire the regeneration of the wider and still struggling regional economy.

5.4.3 Leadership

A decade ago, Scott (2004) attributed the success of Membertou's business growth to its leadership and human capital development, 'using a business approach to achieve social objectives'. This was reinforced in 2014 when Membertou Development Corporation won the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation's inaugural award for excellence in aboriginal economic development. Chief Terry Paul commented: 'We must envision the future for all Aboriginal communities, a future of self-governance, self-determination and economic independence.'

In June 2014, 62-year-old Chief Paul was re-elected for his 16th consecutive term as chief of Membertou First Nation. He won 341 of 672 total votes cast. Paul said the campaign remained respectful and both challengers ran impressive campaigns, encouraging a larger conversation that will help serve the community. His winning platform was based on jobs, housing, community and youth. He also pointed to hard work and an estimated 80 hours going door-to-door to speak with residents.

"I got a lot of insight from the people of the community" he said. "The youth were really very impressive to me. I was pleasantly surprised. I didn't realize they knew so much about the issues concerning the community and their concern about the future of Membertou."

They offered advice on how he could better relate to the community, be more open and have better lines of communication with them, particularly when major decisions are being made. The Youth Chief, together with the Junior Chief and their respective Councils, offer an important insight into how young people's leadership ability is being fostered by the Community. (Cape Breton Post, 2014).

In the wings is a mooted constitutional change that would enable the Membertou Chief and Council to assume governance of the Reserve lands from the Federal government. The contribution of other Council members is increasingly evident in this move.

6. Inter-case comparison

The four cases presented here are diverse in many respects, and a comparison between them highlights six broad themes addressed in the cases.

6.1 The leaders and community identity

All four organisations have been led long-term by people with undoubted qualities of entrepreneurial vision, and an ability to create innovative projects by drawing on under-used resources. They have been able to gain followership within their communities and to build trust within and around their organisations. Leadership in this way can be seen as a co-created relationship between the leader and the organisation and broader community, rather than a power or role-based relationship. McKeever, Jack and Anderson (2012) expanded on this topic of the relationship between the entrepreneur and the community in which they are embedded, referring to Barth's (1969) exploration of the interaction between community membership and

entrepreneurial activities, with their identity being influenced by their community origin and background:

‘If entrepreneurs are embedded in and committed to the welfare of their communities, then the developments which emerge are more likely to be in a form which is co-created by the community and the entrepreneur’ (McKeever et al, 2012: 13).

Anderson and Jack (2002) had explored the significance of social capital and embeddedness in entrepreneurial networks, and this study aligns with the conclusions of their work that entrepreneurial contributions to community development are identified and shaped by being embedded, as suggested by Granovetter (1985). Extending this to the role of the leader, it suggests that the identity of entrepreneurial leaders in such organisations and communities can be co-created, and is strengthened in this process.

In terms of gender, whilst four are men, in the case of Hill Holt Wood the organisational leadership has been practised by a dyad of Karen as CEO, who gained acclaim as a social entrepreneur and leader in her own right, and Nigel as founder. There is more research to be done in exploring the growing contributions of female leaders in social and sustainable enterprises. Each of these leaders had effectively either founded the organisation, or in the cases of Terry Paul and Rankin MacSween in Cape Breton, had taken it on as a struggling organisation. In all four cases, the leaders became highly identified with the enterprises they have led. Even in the case of Hill Holt Wood, where the founder stepped down from an executive role, this strong identification continues, making the transition to new leadership problematic. It can be a formidable task to replace a successful leader who has founded or led the organisation for a long period.

In all four cases, the appointment and succession of new leaders to replace the founders/incumbents is both inevitable and the subject of speculation in the respective communities. Arguably, this is little different from the perennial succession issue which most family businesses face. Indeed, there is a close association between two of the enterprises and the founding or controlling families. This may be one succession option, for upcoming family members could conceivably play a role in the leadership of some of the organisations. In the case of Membertou, the families not only of Paul, but others are well represented in the governance of the organisation and the community. Also, as an important developmental process, there is a Youth Chief and Council which engages young people in running the community and prepares them for future leadership roles. Partly as a result of the Indian Act which requires periodic elections of a Chief and Council, Membertou has a structured and democratic form of leadership, requiring biennial elections of the Chief. This engages the leader with the community as a mechanism for renewal.

The conventional social and private enterprise models are more dependent on the development or appointment of new leadership. In all cases, it is suggested that this is best viewed as a reasonably long-term process, in which the attraction and development of younger talent who can move into increasingly responsible leadership roles over a period, and gain confidence and trust within the organisation, is necessary and needs to be planned over time.

6.2 Direction

The direction, or strategic path, taken by the leader and his or her team, is a critical factor. A principal reason for loss of confidence in leaders is the result of poor judgements. The leaders of these organisations have been relatively successful over time in making and implementing decisions. They would all prefer to be seen as innovators and ambassadors, rather than detail-oriented managers. The strategies adopted have been entrepreneurial, emergent and to some extent iterative; both Genesis and Membertou experienced periods of struggle and failure prior to being able to consolidate and grow. This perpetuates a divide between 'leaders' as strategic pioneers and communicators, who disclaim the role of 'managers' as more administratively and practically oriented, as in the distinction between entrepreneurs and managers (Rae, 2015).

6.3 Entrepreneurial innovation and value creation

A distinguishing characteristic of the direction pursued by all four cases is growth through entrepreneurship and innovation. HHW, Genesis and New Dawn all identified recurrent social problems and developed creative ways to address these, using or attracting latent resources in the community to achieve this. Social innovation can also describe projects such as the mental wellbeing work at HHW and the family entertainment centre at the heart of Genesis, in that they create social value through applying latent resources in new ways. Membertou has transformed its identity as a community, from a disadvantaged native reserve to one which as its strapline 'welcomes the world' to its world-class hotel, conference centre and other amenities. This reflects a transformation of identity and of aspiration and orientation to the wider world as visitor and destination. New Dawn is a significant generator of activity in the downtown Sydney area.

Again, McKeever et al (2012) reinforce this notion of creating value from latent community resources: 'The entrepreneurs described seemed to share an understanding of latent value, and how to transform it into an appropriate form for harvesting benefit for the local community' (McKeever et al, 2012:12).

6.4 Community

The relationships between entrepreneurship, community and value creation are increasingly recognised as significant. Lyons et al (2012) found examples of communities and local entrepreneurs co-developing opportunities to promote sustainable community-centred growth. All four organisations assert that their relationship with their communities is a defining value, but this takes rather different forms.

Genesis, New Dawn and Membertou all set out to be for, and increasingly of, their communities. Membertou's community is both ethnic, of the Mi'kmaw families, and geographic of those who live on the reserve. This is distinctive, yet not unique, as there are examples of community enterprise organisations situated in and for ethnic minority areas in the UK. Genesis started with a Christian faith-based motivation to help young people in a community with limited opportunities to develop more meaningful lives. By locating itself in the centre of its small town, it has become one of the two focal points, the other being an oversized superstore across the main road. Both these organisations have been able to bring together resources and to create physical facilities, amenities and opportunities for their communities which make them a daily part of many residents' lives. New Dawn also originated in a faith-based tradition of community activism and plays a vital role in community social, cultural and economic cohesion.

Their leadership has engaged their communities in the governance and running of the organisations very significantly; the enterprise is an integral part of, and has helped to regenerate, the community, in a reflexive relationship. The case of Hill Holt Wood is spatially different, in that it regenerated a woodland asset that was largely forgotten by the rural villages in its proximity, and the enterprise reached out to engage those communities and to offer them participation in the development, governance and use of an amenity.

6.5 Culture

An organisation's culture can be conceived, as by Watson and Harris (1999) as the collective resource of normative values, discourses, practices and behaviours which are enacted in it. All organisations will, in time, develop an organic culture. The culture of the new and small enterprise often tends to reflect the personality, values and behaviours of the founder-entrepreneur. But as organisational cultures grow, they can be notoriously slow and resistant to change, which is itself an issue for leaders, especially when new, to reflect on.

Organisations such as those in this study aim to change, challenge, and improve the status quo, rather than to accept it, being formed and led by people discontent with an unsatisfactory stasis. Hence the cultural values they espouse and practise are also likely to be values which prompt their communities to take note and to change. Promoting and practising a culture of sustainability is a prime example of this. However, in organisations which are 'of and for' their communities, that culture is also likely to infuse the organisation. This may be positive, but in the case of declining communities with little shared tradition of entrepreneurship, such as Cape Breton and industrial Derbyshire, changing deep-set attitudes of dependency and pessimism is a challenging endeavour.

6.6 Sustainability

Sustainability, like many intangible nouns, has been ascribed a broad range of meanings. Referring back to Adams (2006) and Scott Cato (2009), sustainable development can be defined by social, economic and environmental sustainability; being renewable and having positive or neutral effects. Enterprises define sustainability in their own terms and those they deem acceptable to their consciences and communities. Hill Holt Wood goes further, being the most developed in environmental sustainability of the four organisations, in seeking to promote societal awareness and change at a more wide-ranging level. There is a danger, as Steve Holmes expressed, that the perceptions of being green, Fairtrade and ethical have been hijacked by organisations as part of their marketing as distinct from their core values. A passive and compliant approach to sustainability may be evidence of good corporate citizenship, but does not really qualify an organisation to be described as 'sustainable'.

Membertou again has a distinctive contribution to this debate. The First Nations peoples in Canada increasingly act as stewards of the natural environment, with a longer-term perspective towards their land heritage than corporate organisations which often seek to extract maximum value with minimal financial costs and a disregard for the environmental consequences, as seen in the concerns over mineral extraction and the effects on First Nations territories. This is an increasingly contested issue in Canada, following the Tsilhqot'in First Nation's legal ruling in June 2014, which required legal consent to be obtained from indigenous peoples for development on lands to which they can assert title. Membertou itself does not comment on environmental sustainability in its annual report,

although decisions on energy and development are taken with environmental sustainability to the fore, such as in the case of the recent school development which has high energy sustainability performance.

So the organisations have adopted different stances on sustainability, with greater emphasis being given to economic and social sustainability than environmental in three of the four cases. Further progress would depend on changing expectations from the communities or external stakeholders. Public grant awarding bodies are increasingly concerned with environmental performance, so this will become a growing issue.

7. Conceptualisation: sustainability as an outcome of entrepreneurial leadership

A conceptual framework is proposed from these themes. Essentially, the organisation has to define its own meaning of sustainability, though external standards and measures can inform this, for which Adams' (2006) framework of social, economic and environmental sustainability provides a normative approach. However, individual organisations will weigh these priorities in relation to their own goals and value systems.

Leadership is clearly a critical factor in the pursuit of sustainability. The strategic direction and goals which are set out and pursued by the organisational leadership can make more or less specific reference to different aspects of sustainability. In following this strategic direction towards sustainable goals, four aspects and the connections between them appear significant:

1. Identity: the identification of the leader with the organisation and community in a co-constructed relationship of shared meaning;
2. Culture: the values, practices, discourse and behaviours manifested by the organisation, being consistent with the strategic direction and prioritisation of sustainability;
3. Community: the active engagement and participation of the organisation's community (internal staff and external stakeholders) in its governance and operations, consistent with the culture and aligned with the strategy;
4. Entrepreneurial innovation: a continual process of identifying problems, reconfiguring these as opportunities, developing innovative solutions, attracting and using resources in new ways.

The interaction between these four aspects can both generate energy to achieve the strategic direction and result in progress towards sustainable goals. This interaction can be seen as a learning process, related to the entrepreneurial learning literature (Kempster & Cope, 2010). Effective leadership promotes and supports individual and shared learning as an integral part of the strategic and operational working of the organisation. Individual and collective learning processes occur within and mediate between each of these four aspects. Learning by reflection, sharing and connecting ideas informs the strategy making and implementation, and the enactment of sustainable approaches. This framework is shown in figure 2.

This model is relatively simple, yet it can make a contribution to the need for knowledge of leadership in relation to developing organisations which are both sustainable and entrepreneurial. It is important to recognise that the qualities referred to are discursive, with contextual meanings, so that rather than 'culture' or 'sustainability' being reified, they are labels applied to fluid concepts,

the meanings of which are co-created and contextual in the case of each organisation. However, it is also proposed that organisational progress towards sustainability is unlikely to be achieved without reflection, learning, development and connectivity between these aspects, and this learning process is a feature of these organisations.

[insert figure 2 here]

8. Conclusions

This study contributes to the development of new understanding for leadership in sustainable entrepreneurial organisations. This final section considers theoretical and policy implications and recommendations for further work in the field.

The growth in sustainable and social entrepreneurship and innovation mean that more research, practitioner and organisational development will occur internationally in the coming years. Leadership development will become increasingly significant in enabling this growth. Better research to inform entrepreneurial leadership, and how this functions within the related areas of social entrepreneurship and innovation, community development and sustainability, is required. Ideally, research and practitioner development should be connected more effectively to become mutually informing and reinforcing.

The exploration of entrepreneurial leadership development has so far been largely in the context of structured programmes often based in Higher Education, and there has been less research centred in organisations. This study contributes to an organisation and community centred understanding of leadership development, and suggests that dimensions of identity, community engagement, and innovation, can be explored in more depth in this situated context. The significant roles of communities, families, and the interactions between community and value creation from latent resources, were interesting perspectives which would not have surfaced in an educationally focussed study. It is essential for researchers to venture beyond the academic environment to explore leadership learning in community and organizational settings.

Although the cases originate from two regions, one in Atlantic Canada and one in the East Midlands of the United Kingdom, there were many connections and similarities in the themes which emerged from the cases although there were contextual differences. These included political, policy, social and cultural variables. Yet these differences were much less marked than the similarities at the level of human dynamics within the organisation-community relationships.

The study has explored the practice of leadership in the context of entrepreneurial organisations and their communities, aiming to explore how leadership can further sustainability, both organisationally and more generally. There is no clear or simple answer, although how sustainability is expressed in the context of the organisational and community culture is significant. The comparison of research cases suggest that the personal and ethical values of the leader contribute to this, together with their openness and motivation to change. The cultural values shared and voiced by the leader with the organisation and community need to be both expressed and practised authentically. Deep community engagement and relations forged between the leader, individuals, families and groups

are fundamental to this. This relationship and trust develop over time, forming a bond which makes the succession of new leadership problematic.

To become sustainable, entrepreneurial organisations need to place systematic learning and people development at the heart of their strategy and operations; otherwise, they risk not achieving sustainability. The learning and development processes in these cases and those of their type are situated, experiential and social, and go beyond the 'leadership training' course-based arena. However the deep level of engagement required of leaders may itself be a barrier to succession and to allowing the founding leaders to step down. If the leadership development challenge is not addressed by organizations themselves, and the stakeholders with whom they work, including government and community organizations, there is a risk that there will be too few candidates prepared, able and willing to take on the future leadership of these organizations in order to make them sustainable. Such leadership roles present opportunities but also sacrifices and challenges. They require the commitment not only of great personal time and energy for what may be a decade or more of life, but also the transparent and authentic practice of personal behaviours consistent with the values of the organisation. This may well be a policy as well as organizational issue. It is evident in areas with declining and ageing populations, such as Maritime Canada, that community organisations who are unable to attract new leadership are not sustainable and face eventual closure.

Educational organisations, including schools, colleges and universities, have useful roles to play in educating and preparing people for leadership roles in such organisations. Social enterprise projects and organisations at student and community level can provide stimulating and challenging practical opportunities for experiential learning and accreditation. There is increasing student interest in such development and it can provide a valuable contribution to the human capital of sustainable organisations, by involving younger people in organisational renewal, as well as for collaborative research opportunities between educators, students and organisations. However this also needs to be seen as a lifelong learning issue: as active working lives extend and demographics change, there is a growing need for people to assume leadership roles in such organisations at later stages in their lives.

At a policy level, the need for entrepreneurial organisations to work with educators in this way needs to be recognised, valued and supported; there are signs that this is now happening in the UK, Canada and other countries. Further study of this topic, adopting a longer-term approach to follow the development of emergent entrepreneurial leaders in organisations aiming for sustainability, could provide valuable insights. A group-based study which tracks the development of a learning set of entrepreneurial leaders of community organizations who are at different life stages, and originating from a representative mix of gender and backgrounds, could address practical, theoretical and pedagogical issues. The learning narratives of leaders and learning facilitators could form a valuable study and teaching resource, whilst also informing developmental case studies for teaching and organizational development.

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Figures, images & tables

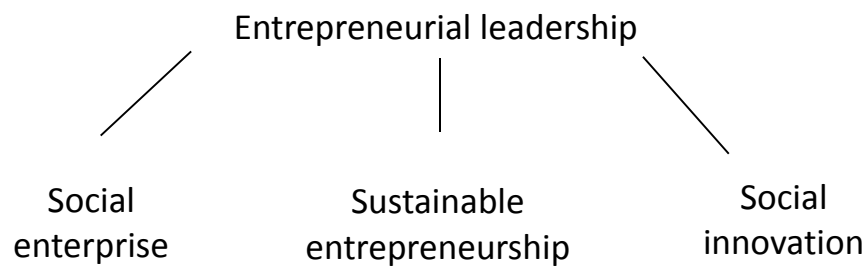


Figure 1: conceptual themes in the literature (Source: author)

Organisation	Year established	Location	Type	Main activity	Founder/leader
Hill Holt Wood	1997	Lincolnshire UK	Social Enterprise	Woodland enterprise	Nigel & Kath Lowthrop
Genesis Social Enterprise	1991	Derbyshire UK	Social Enterprise	Social & community enterprise	Stephen Holmes
New Dawn Enterprises Ltd	1976	Cape Breton Canada	Company limited by guarantee	Community economic development	Rankin MacSween
Membertou Inc.	1959	Cape Breton Canada	Native band - Corporation	Community social economic development	Chief Terry Paul

Table 1: Case study organisations (Source: author)



Figure2: Leadership for sustainability in entrepreneurial organisations (Source: author)